

PILGRIM DAY

julian was explaining
to his father-in-law
an old salesman by any other name
that the bum
who always showed for
the big dinner
was actually
a poet.

"a published poet."
he emphasized,
"other people know
what he does
and they accept it."
old mike didn't look
too thrilled by that idea
but he was a realist
who respected numbers.

he put on his
bifocals and had
a gander at a little mag.
"well," he announced
a couple pages later,
"it isn't as bad as i
thought it would be."

i was sitting on the arm
of a chair and if i'd been
listening i wouldn't have known
which side to fall off.
"anyway," the old fuck
declared with finality,
"this isn't poetry,
it's philosophy."

julian was prepared
to take issue with that
or anything else his wife's
father might have said
and old mike was prepared
to clear up any misconceptions
his daughter's husband might cling to.

they started calling on me
to support their arguments
but every time i opened my mouth
i inadvertently made a point
for the opposite side.
soon they left me out of it
entirely.

i didn't mind. it's flattering
to be argued about. i tilted
the bottle of cognac and sat
back. julian, in spite of his
education, and mike, in spite
of his lack of same, both
made a number of good points.

by the end of the evening
i was feeling a trifle self-
conscious and more than a
trifle bored and i'm relieved
the subject has never come up
again. the only reference
made to that night was on
the following holiday when
old mike greeted me by saying
"here comes shakespeare,
hide the cognac."

of course
julian immediately
handed me the bottle
of v.s.o.p.

RAINY DAY WOMAN #1

when i was 15
on my first job
as a bus boy the best
looking waitress, 10
years older, used to
tease me. when it
rained she would say:
"we shouldn't be working,
this is baby-making weather."
i poured coffee on my hand
when she walked by
and before long she started
'forgetting' to leave
my 15% when she went home.
she was a master of
the quick remark
delivered on the fly
and a month passed before
i grabbed the manager
back by the dishwasher.
he gave her a list
of the days she owed
me for. it rained